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One of the major problems in doctoral education, the shortage of Ph.D. holders, is discussed. A brief history of the German influence on graduate schools in the United States is given to suggest the reasons why the traditional Ph.D. is not designed for present needs. Suggestions are given for a more effective Ph.D. curriculum which will meet the need for college teachers as well as research scholars. (BN)

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A RECONSIDERATION OF THE PH.D.

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AMERICAN Graduate Schools of Arts and Sciences are victims of a dilemma which they have all too seldom been willing to face. Nearly a century and a half ago, a young American, George Ticknor of Boston, one of the first to study in a German university, reported to Thomas Jefferson the great satisfaction he was finding in his foreign education. He hoped, he said, that there might be transplanted to American institutions of higher learning the spirit he had found abroad "of pursuing all literary studies philosophically—of making scholarship as little of drudgery and mechanism as possible."[1] Seven years later having returned to Harvard he was attempting to promote change, for as he said "we must accommodate ourselves more to the spirit and wants of the times and country in which we live."[2]

It was no easy matter to accomplish in the United States but the idea of universities with educational programs for graduate students eventually prevailed as instruments in general use. Today it has been proclaimed that "the graduate school currently is the most strategic segment of higher education." Yet in almost the same breath it is said that "the graduate school at the present time is the most inefficient, and, in some ways, the most ineffective division of the university." From an eminently practical standpoint it is also arresting to read the statement: "The annual production of Ph.D. holders is less than half the number required, and the demand in the next [decade or so] will probably be double that of the present."[3]

We should in truth be in the midst of much wrestling with our di-

lemma. Various investigations have been made and their fruits published. Numerous speeches have been delivered, articles written, and books printed. There is notable defense and powerful indictment. Among the counts in the latter we are told that "in its suppression of all excitement, enjoyment, spontaneity, enthusiasm, the Graduate School converts the graduate regimen into a psychological ordeal for so many of its participants . . . . It is made into a monkish process of self-flagellation and psychological debasement, from which its victims emerge permanently crippled. Neurosis, psychosis, self-hatred, these are the concomitants."[4] It is indicated that after the doctoral dissertation writing experience the student may be "inclined never to turn his hand to writing again" and that "the most significant division of the university" may be "so operated as to discourage interest in scholarship rather than to develop it."[5]

On the other hand, the most intensive survey of the situation concludes: "By and large, the graduate school is doing a reasonably good job or better, as judged by both the students and the employers. As for the trainers themselves, even they think that things are better today than they were in the good old days when *they* were being trained."[6]

These investigations, the varied findings, the resulting debates, and controversy are of particular significance at this time because of the increasing awareness of greater need for the work of the graduate school, the doubt as to whether existing facilities can supply it, and the consequent questions: how can the need be filled? by what methods? and in what institutions? These questions indicate that there is a confusion of counsel which arises from our dilemma. What is it?

Reference has been made above to the beginning of a new experience in education which American youth sought in increasing numbers in the last century. Commencing in the second decade of the 1800's a stream of students began to attend German universities and as their number increased the advice of men like Ticknor to transplant German methods, organization, and objectives became more influential. What had happened was that American collegians had left an atmosphere of control and had found freedom. It inspired them to want to provide it at home where freedom, liberty, and independence played so large a part in the mores of the new republic. But they had to face formidable difficulties.

Higher education in the United States in those early days was pro-

vided by a scattered variety of colleges, mostly denominational, with only a university or two in *esse* or projected. The classical tradition dominated the curricula and the teaching methods most common were those which could be best defined as "recitations" based on memory of assignments or lectures; even the classics were parsed rather than translated, and there was little to challenge understanding, let alone thought.

When they went abroad these early American students therefore found in Germany something arresting. There was at that time no German empire so there was no imperial educational system but there was a series of state systems.[7] As the various German political divisions had emerged, certain ancient universities had been reorganized and new ones created to meet a new politico-educational need: a pattern was in the process of evolving, in fact, it was considerably well developed. State systems were operating under the general control of ministries of education. These systems had two major elements: preparatory schools or gymnasia and universities. Members of the university faculties were appointed by the ministers of education, generally upon nomination from the university. Students were chosen and ranked by examinations set by the state.

The basic elements in the systems, the gymnasia, were conducted under university-trained teachers and their pupils were disciplined. These students emerged, if they passed the state examinations, with diplomas which would admit them to the state university. Here they were confronted with the problems of almost complete freedom. Those in the Faculty of Philosophy were candidates for the bachelor's and the doctor's degrees, and as in the gymnasia the principal responsibility was to pass examinations for these degrees. There were lectures, disputations, and, for the more advanced, seminars. To become a Doctor of Philosophy one had to present a printed thesis which had to be a contribution to knowledge and which the candidate had to defend orally before a committee appointed to sit in formal judgment—his thesis supervisor would not be among them.

The base upon which this system was erected was the dependence of the state upon its university not only for all professional men, but for its civil servants, its teachers, and for the scholars who would advance knowledge and skill. All teachers therefore had to be research men who taught their students to be such, studying under the Faculty of Philosophy, where all scholars were trained as though they would ultimately

be candidates for the highest degrees. The gymnasia were organized like the universities and the curricula were designed from the beginning to build up the cumulated knowledge needed by research scholars in science, philology, social science, history, and the other disciplines needed by those who were to make the discoveries in the arts and sciences.

Not only university professors, but the teachers in the gymnasia and the servants of the state were to be Ph.D.'s. Creative scholars, learned in their subjects, were to teach others to become like themselves, to reproduce their own kind. The lecturers designed their words to open new horizons and to plumb new depths, speaking only to those sufficiently interested to be willing to pay special fees to hear them. The seminars were designed to teach students how to discover. The advocates of this system declared that it was dedicated to discovering the truth in an atmosphere of freedom and self-reliance presided over by creative scholars who wished to help, encourage, and direct, but not to control. They sought to serve the cause of truth and to guarantee the independence, accuracy, and industry of their disciples who might well seek to emulate and surpass them in achievement. They were to serve the state, to serve society, and to carry on the torch which would light the path of discovery.

To the American boys trained in the uncritical monotonies of often meaningless acceptance and recitation this opportunity was very attractive. The students listened to men of reputation and, if accepted, could work with them in small intimate groups. There were few rules or personal restraints. Strangers in a strange land, they could do as they pleased. They had to learn to work hard but it was work which challenged them: they had to solve problems; they had to think; they had to seek new paths, but the rewards would be their own discoveries.

So from the beginning in 1816, more and more youth sought this experience and within a century their numbers reached 10,000.[8] They were to be distributed all over the country and it was a rare university or college campus that did not have members of its faculty, sometimes more than a score, who had had at least one *Studentjahr* in Germany. Those so trained brought back a sense of achievement. Also they brought remembrance of excitement, romance, and life in an older, more sophisticated culture. Many of them sought, as did the first, to transplant the system. It was a long and at first tedious effort and for fifty years it had scarcely any success. The idea in its American form, the Graduate

School of Arts and Sciences, did not really become established until the 1880's and even then its continued growth was slow.

The truth was that in the American states of colonial origin and even in the Western state systems more recently established, the climate favorable to graduate training was not present. The atmosphere of the classical colleges and the professional schools prevailed. Few knew how to do research or even to appreciate it. On all sides was evidence of a prolonged cultural colonialism. The plan finally became firmly established, however, and it was transformed into a status symbol as well as an educational program. The cry, which is even louder today, began to be heard, "We must have one too!"

But what was this new program? And here we come to the dilemma. It was a curious chimera growing out of a grafting operation. Unless the basic characteristics are recognized, the program and its problems are difficult to understand. An illustration drawn from political history may help this recognition. In the early nineteenth century there was general revolution among the Latin American colonies and there appeared a score of new nations, most of them republics. The United States had successfully set a revolutionary pattern and these new republics hastened to follow it. We had created a constitution—a frame of government spelling out our pattern of self-government. It was striking in its concept and in its practical working, so certain of the new republics used it as a model. Our system had grown out of our experience and with us it worked. But these republics had had a life history different from ours, so this borrowed ready-made did not fit. In similar fashion the German university system had grown up as the result of a long German experience. Within the American system there had been nothing comparable. So when the effort to graft the German branch on the American educational tree was made, the result was a certain incongruity which has plagued us ever since and which to a certain degree is responsible for our present dilemma.

When the founders of the higher educational institutions of the American colonies and the new republic undertook their labors they had drawn little if anything from the German. They were used to the corporate form and the program of religious indoctrination which had been so significant in the colonial enterprise. Thus most of the early colleges in the colonies were created and operated by corporations whose boards of trustees hired teachers to indoctrinate the pupils. There were no edu-

cational systems in the United States in the German sense, no self-governing ancient faculties owing allegiance to ministers of education. Even when the Western communities began to establish state systems, so called, they were of slow growth, and adopted the classical curricula of the older Eastern foundations. The American way was not, except in isolated instances, to try to create a university after the German pattern, but literally to graft a makeshift operation called a graduate school on a college or series of colleges and professional schools. Several made attempts at something more congruous but the result was much the same—a resulting incongruity.

The German university was part of a system extending from the gymnasium to the Ph.D. and it was cumulative. The part of the pattern which appealed to the Americans was the phase designed to supply the needed teachers and, much later, the research scholars whom government and business were to demand. But there were no gymnasia in America and the arts colleges which conferred the baccalaureate degrees were independent institutions of a different origin and experience than generally known in Germany.

At first there was an effort at transplanting the liberty and independence admired in Germany but in many instances at least three obstacles appeared in the path. The arts colleges upon which these graduate schools were fastened were largely schools of careful scrutiny and discipline with great emphasis upon enforced learning and on teaching that was mechanical and dependent largely on memory. Another obstacle was the fact that so many of the students were not resident but part-time people of irregular attendance. The third obstacle was the fact that instead of recruiting and organizing a new faculty, extra duties were assigned to teachers, many of whom were engaged in forcing reluctant and immature youth to learn and recite. For this they were not even paid in released time. Furthermore they were expected to do research and teach unqualified students to do it too.

Undergraduate teachers worked out a mechanical system of credit hours required for the bookkeeping necessary when so many students were part time. They too often extended undergraduate learning habits without cultivating the power of thought or analysis. To this were added language requirements made necessary by the fact that they were adapting a system largely German and covering up the unwillingness or inability of arts colleges to give adequate instruction in modern

foreign languages. An examination designed to discover whether the student was qualified was prescribed, generally held much too late, and turning much of the student experience into a prolonged cram operation. The German idea of a doctoral dissertation which was to be a contribution to knowledge, which, as in Germany, was to be published and publicly defended, was made the capstone.

But here, in the humanities and the social sciences particularly, the student was not permitted to begin his research until two years had been spent in cramming and then he was encouraged, even required, to write a long book while he was itching to get married or in later years either surrounded by offspring in a small apartment, or supported by his wife with all the morale-building psychology which that situation supplies. The prohibitive costs of printing, and perhaps other reasons, finally did away with the publishing of the dissertation in such form that it could be reviewed in scholarly journals or read by any save the most hardy addict of microfilm eyestrain.

The final examination or defense of the dissertation in most instances became an hour and a half discussion with one's immediate instructors of what all hoped the work demonstrated. Sometimes examiners came from other departments who either sat in bored silence or attempted to contribute. Occasionally, particularly if one of them didn't like the supervisor, some critical questions might be asked but his friends rallied and the candidate received his degree—this latter picture is somewhat of an exaggeration but it has been known to happen.

I believe it was further unfortunate that this program was called a school and that a dean was appointed. Had a school really been created and its dean been granted any substantial responsibility all would have been better. But in universities with anywhere from five to twenty-five schools all having faculties and budgets, curricula and defined functions, to establish a nest of freedom without independent faculty, budget, curriculum, stated term, or authority was something bound to create what resulted.

What had been done was to take something that had been developed as a part of a system with a position in it which was logical, recognized, and provided for emotionally, psychologically, and financially, and to introduce it into an anarchy without any system, without preparation, without making a place for it, and without any real provision for it institutionally, financially, emotionally, or psychologically.

It must be further borne in mind that a university in the United States is usually not a university in the German sense. It is a series of schools or colleges, which have generally been attached to an ancient college. This college and these schools have evolved as more or less self-contained entities each with an organization that requires some sort of thoughtful group faculty planning. Each has had a staff which must be recruited, a curriculum which must be planned and operated, a budget which must be calculated, secured, and spent. All these group responsibilities require a sense of group identification and action. These the various other colleges and schools in the universities have had. But when a so-called school is imposed upon these—without curriculum, budget, or direct recruiting responsibilities, the essential ingredient is omitted and there is too little motivation provided for carrying on a real group enterprise.

The result was then and since a minimum of thinking about graduate affairs. So little has been required. That which was needed initially had been supplied by those whose major thoughts were elsewhere. What was considered a well nigh perfect system was in truncated shape imposed on another operation which never thought of it as more than an adjunct concern. Decision making and judgment were left to undergraduate departments whose collective thinking, *i.e.* curriculum making, recruiting, and budget, was by long custom not Ph.D. oriented. The result was that there has been surprisingly little thought about it. The Graduate School, so called, is practically as it was when it was imported. When new schools have been created they have been too frequently unblushingly copied rather than invented, though nearly a century has passed and the world is so different and change so accelerated.

Now we are in trouble; we are swamped by numbers. The original Ph.D. concept was that of a group of scholars lecturing to such students as wanted to hear them enough to pay for the privilege without gaining any credit. Then the professors would sit down in seminars with such disciples as they chose, often in their own homes. But today we have hordes who must amass stated numbers of credits. Students are too often admitted without adequate prospects for the seminar training that should be the core of their experience. Too many of their masters accept too many, assume responsibility for direction that they cannot give—and besides dissertations are not printed any more and there will be no

reviews. I do not say that many of our colleagues succumb—but many are tempted.

Our students in contrast to those in the German system come from a confusing variety of educational experiences. While some are very well prepared—honors students from senior seminars with well written theses to their credit—others are very badly equipped—students with good grades but from colleges with little to commend them as preparatory training schools for work for graduate degrees. Our present hybrid organization provides too much organization for some of the students, not enough for others. We are falling between two stools.

Now unless we are going to admit only the highly creative, and in so doing shrug off responsibility for the numbers society demands, we can best educate sufficient graduate students adequately and without waste by recognizing that we are performing two tasks, not merely one. For we now admit at society's demand more than we can really care for under the old definition of the Ph.D. program.

Innovation is called for. We should either limit our admissions and organize our student-faculty relation on a one-to-five or at most one-to-ten ratio, or be more honest about what we are now doing. We are, in fact, giving two kinds of Ph.D.'s without admitting it. One is designed to be inspirational, to join the creative capacity of the director with the creative potential of the neophyte. The other is on the routine side, designed to enable the students to obtain their union cards in the teaching profession. This insistence that all candidates for the Ph.D. ostensibly follow the same pattern is unfair to both groups. It hampers the creative and it can discourage the diligent.

In various schools in the universities there are "pass" and "honors" degrees. This programming might be applied to the Ph.D. Also most other university degrees have definite schedules, usually three or four years marked out in stages. I think the time has come because of changing conditions in society and in academic life to consider a more effective programming of the Ph.D. curriculum. I would favor a four-year schedule designed so that the Ph.D. candidates would be conditioned to take their degrees in a period of no greater length.

Those electing to be candidates for a "pass" major, a degree particularly designed for those thinking primarily of teaching, would register for courses designed not to cram them with facts but to encourage

them to synthesize and to interpret. If foreign languages were prescribed, courses would be provided which they would be required to pass, thus ending the present quixotic situation. Candidates for this degree would have at least a year as teaching fellows under supervision. As one of the present problems of the graduate school is the fact that too many students are poorly prepared to write, they would also be members of a seminar in which the principal requirement would be the preparation of a publishable journal article. This program would be arranged so that it could be normally accomplished in four years.

The students selected for the honors Ph.D., and I would make this a matter of selection rather than election, should have programs of independent study, arranged in consultation with a sponsor or a directing committee, which would emphasize seminar courses and freedom from lecture requirements and be tailored to the needs of the individual. He and his sponsor would work out a plan designed to meet his need for research training, climaxing in a piece of original work which would open doors to a life of creative activity, not close them. He should leave the university with his degree and an eagerness to continue discovery.

As far as possible financial aid should be supplied to both types of candidates based on need and designed to assure those to whom the awards are made the support needed for the three or four years of their work, provided always that the quality of their endeavor be maintained.

Thus we should face our dilemma of the double standard in some fashion better than that which we now employ. A century, more or less, is a long time to go with only a minimum of educational thought. Isn't it time for innovation, for devising a program for graduate school training better suited to deal with the confusions of the last half of the twentieth century?

NOTES

1. George Ticknor to Thomas Jefferson, April 23, 1816, quoted in: Richard J. Storr, THE BEGINNINGS OF GRADUATE EDUCATION IN AMERICA (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 16.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

3. Oliver C. Carmichael, GRADUATE EDUCATION: A CRITIQUE AND A PROGRAM (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 195.

4. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "What's Wrong with Graduate Literary Study," AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 32: 227, 1963.

5. Carmichael, p. 51.

6. Bernard Berelson, GRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 232.

7. Wilhelm Lexis, "German Universities," REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION FOR THE YEAR 1891–1892, p. 249, *et seq.*

8. Charles Franklin Thwing, THE AMERICAN AND THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), p. 40.

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